eSubmission Update
for ACD

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December 1, 2006

eSubmission Goal

By the end of September 2007, NIH plans to:

1. Require electronic submission through Grants.gov for all NIH grant applications (no paper apps will be allowed)
2. Transition from the PHS 398 application form to a form set used by many Federal research agencies, the SF424
   - These are currently Pure Edge forms

The timing of this transition is driven by OMB goals for Agencies related to eGov

- OMB set the following FY 2006 goal for agencies: post 75% of funding opportunities in Grants.gov “Find” on “Apply”. The goal for FY ’07 is 100% of funding opportunities should be in “Apply”.

New Process – Submitting Electronically to NIH Through Grants.gov

Prepare to Apply

↓

Find Opportunity and Download Application Package

↓

Prepare Application

↓

Submit Application to Grants.gov (AOR submits)

↓

Check Submission Status in Commons

↓

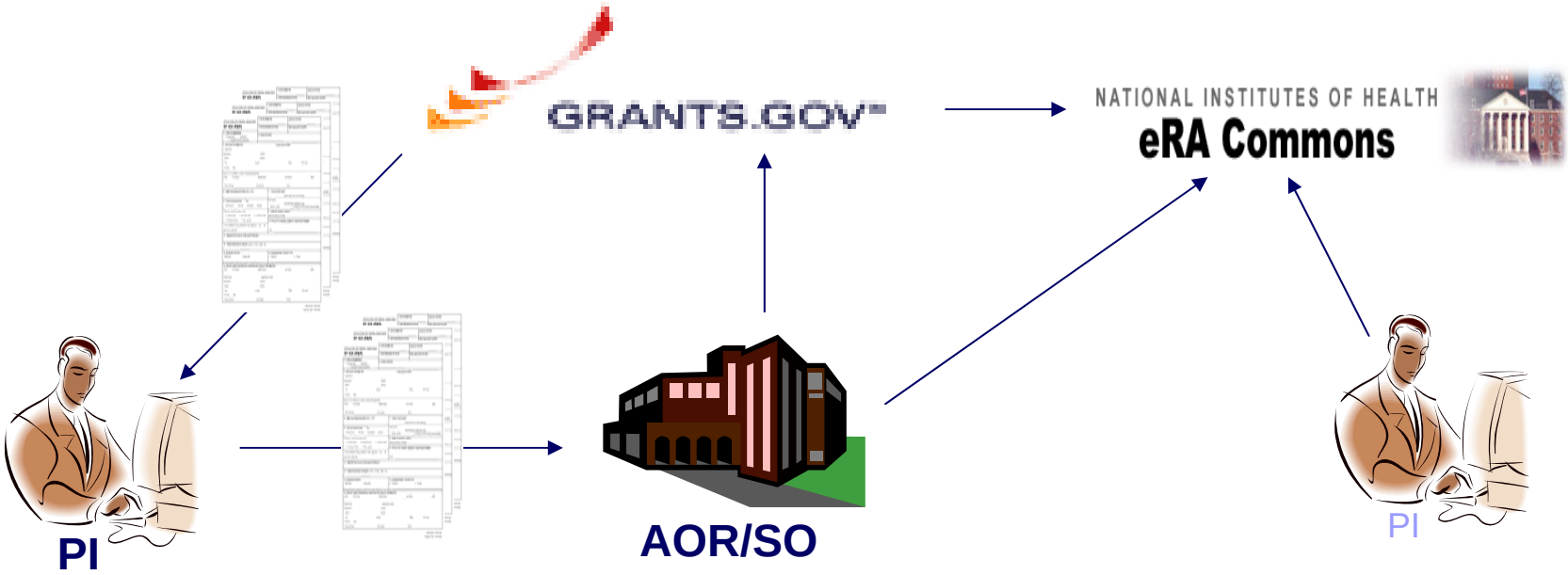
Check Assembled Application

↓

Submission Complete

New Relationship between PI and Central Grants Office

Only Authorized Organizational Representatives (AOR) may submit applications to Grants.gov



PI prepares application and sends it to AOR for submission

AOR submits to Grants.gov

PI and AOR/Signing Official (SO) check submission status and view assembled application in eRA Commons.

On-Time Applications

- Application must be submitted to Grants.gov by 5:00pm on receipt date
- Any errors or warnings generated when NIH systems check the application for compliance with application instructions must be corrected within 5 business days of the receipt date
  - This window of opportunity will shrink once applicants have gained experience

Meeting the eSubmission Transition Timeline

NIH Planned Transition Dates of Mechanisms for Electronic Submission Using the SF424 (R&R)

- SBIR/STTR (Dec. 1, 2005) ✓
- R13/U13 (Dec. 15, 2005) ✓
- R36 (Feb. 17, 2006) ✓
- R15 (Feb. 25, 2006) ✓
- S10 (Mar. 22, 2006) ✓
- X02 (April 18, 2006) ✓
- X01 (May 18, 2006) ✓
- R03, R21 R21/R33, R34 (June 1, 2006) ✓
- R18/U18, R25, C06/UC6 (Oct. 1, 2006) ✓
- R01 Multi-PI Pilot ✓
- DP1 (Jan. 22, 2007) ✓
- **R01 (Feb. 5, 2007)**
- Resource (G7, G8, G11, G13, G20), S11, S21, S22 (May 25, 2007)
- Career Development (K) (June 12, 2007)
- Fellowship (F) (Aug. 8, 2007)
- Training (T&D), U45, D71/U2R,Project/Center (P), G12, M01, R10/U10, S06, SC1, SC2, SC3, R24/U24 (Sept. 25, 2007)
- U01, U19, U54, U56, (Oct. 1, 2007)

Over 18,000 apps received electronically to date

12 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10

2006 2007

We've Come A Long Way

Since December, we have:

- Processed approx 18,000 unique NIH applications submitted through Grants.gov
  - Up to ~1,100 submissions/day
- Trained thousands of investigators, administrators and NIH staff
- Experienced tremendous improvements in number of submissions per application
  - dropped from 4+ in Dec. to ~ 2 in June and beyond
- Provided tools and training to eRA help desk
- Registered thousands of PIs and Institutions in eRA Commons
  - ~4,600 organizations for a total of ~7,900 registered
  - ~34,234 investigators for a total of ~85,100 registerd
- Improved eRA systems
  - Improved text of error messages, reevaluated business rules enforced by system, addressed system bugs

What Do We Expect for Feb 5 R01 Receipt Date?

- Between 4,500-5,000 unique application submissions in the two weeks around Feb 5
  - Approx. 2,500 submissions on peak day based on experience in previous rounds

Partnering with Applicant Community to Make It Work

- **Timeline shift in Feb** – R01s moved from Oct 2006 to February 2007
- **Application receipt deadline** - changed to 5:00pm local time for the applicant institution effective April 2006.9
- **Verification requirement changed –** institutional assurance requirement eliminates need for signing official and PI to take action to verify application image effective May 2006.
- **Parent announcements highlighted** – Parent announcements (for investigator initiated unsolicited research) more accessible

Main Concerns Expressed by Community

- System problems will result in late applications
- Error checking of application done in two stages and could keep application from being accepted
- Mac users will be unable to submit using PureEdge forms
- Help Desks will be unable to handle the volume of calls
- Applicant is unable to print or view assembled application before submission
- Too many attachments required by NIH for research plan
- Electronic PureEdge form usability issues

Concern: System Problems Will Result in Late Applications

Procedures Are in Place to Ensure Applicant Not Penalized in Event of Technical Difficulty

- eRA help desk tracks applications that cannot meet submission deadlines due to system problems with either Grants.gov or eRA
  - Applicant needs to call eRA help desk which will verify problem
  - Apps are tracked and reported to Division of Receipt and Referral to ensure applicant not penalized
  - 4 out of ~ 3,000 applications were reported on this list for Oct 1 receipt date.
    - All technical difficulties were resolved in time for application to catch up to its cohort.

Concern: System Problems Will Result in Late Applications

Procedures Are in Place to Ensure Applicant Not Penalized in Event of Technical Difficulty

- In the event of significant Grants.gov down time close to submission deadline, NIH would extend receipt deadline as necessary
- eRA downtime near receipt date would result in NIH extending window of time for applicants to correct errors in their applications

Concern: Error checking of application is done in two stages and could keep application from being accepted

Ideally we would like this to be a single error checking process. We are exploring whether this might be possible in the future.

- The Pure Edge forms have built-in error checking
  - This enforces rules that apply to all agencies that use the form
  - NIH-specific application instructions cannot be checked by the built-in error checking feature

- NIH has built in a 5 business day correction window after the receipt date to allow applicants to address errors in their application submission for this initial transition period

Suggestion: Allow PDF to be submitted to NIH concurrent with Grants.gov submission

Concern was expressed that inability to address errors found in application will result in a late application

NIH has protections already in place:

- Built in a window of time (currently 5 business days) after the receipt date for the applicant to correct errors.
- Established contingency plans for times when a Grants.gov or eRA system problem cause an application not to be able to be processed

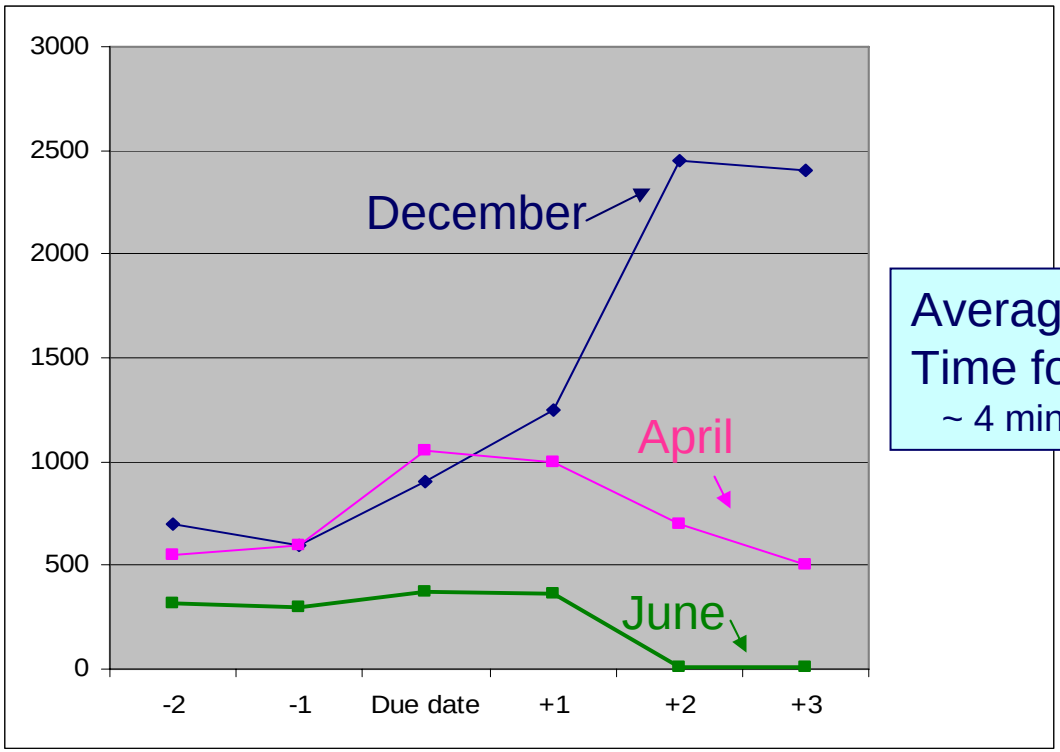
Concern: Mac Users Will Be Unable to Submit Using PureEdge

- Mac users can use the following proven options:
  - NIH-hosted Citrix servers
  - PC emulation software
  - Commercial service providers
- IBM has released an early-release version of the Pure Edge form viewer for Macs
  - In its current iteration it is only an option for some Mac users
  - Hoping for a more robust version to be released by January
- Longer term Grants.gov moving to Adobe forms which is platform independent
  - The transition to Adobe begins for Grants.gov in late spring 2007
  - NIH will phase in the Adobe forms between early summer and October 2007

Concern: Help Desks Will Be Unable to Handle Volume of Calls

Continued software improvements, aggressive education efforts, and preparedness of Offices of Sponsored Research have dramatically reduced calls to help desk.

Lower # of Requests for eRA Support



Average Hold Time for June 1
~ 4 minutes

Concern: Applicant is unable to print of view assembled application before submission

- This is a limitation of Grants.gov's form viewer software.
- NIH has addressed this limitation by providing the opportunity to view the assembled application in the eRA Commons after submission.
  - Applicants have 2 weekdays to view the application. If there is a problem, the AOR may reject that version and submit a corrected application.

Concern: Too Many Attachments for Research Plan

NIH requires the research plan to be submitted as a number of attachments in order to:

- Provide bookmarks that help reviewers access sections of the electronic application
- Ensure complete application by allowing for systems to check that information is submitted if required
  - For example, if human subjects involved then the human subject section is required

Concern: Electronic PureEdge Form Usability Issues

Grants.gov is moving to an Adobe e-forms solution and is looking to incorporate some usability improvements into the new forms.

NIH has been collecting user feedback and is providing input into this process to ensure concerns of our applicants are conveyed.

Positive Feedback from Applicant Community

- Happy not to have to submit multiple copies of the application
- Like that the resolution of images is much better than scanned paper applications – and images are in color
- Appreciate automated headers, footers, pagination and tables of contents
- Many institutions like having Grants.gov as a single submission point for all 26 Agencies
- Commonality of form elements seen as positive

Outreach Done Over Past Year

- 30 eSubmission-related NIH Guide Announcements
- Press release
- E-mail blast to all applicant PIs and administrators over last 6 years announcing electronic transition timeline
- Electronic subscriber based communications (listservs etc) reaching over 40,000 people
- Presentations/booths/training at scientific, administrative and NIH sponsored meetings
- eSubmission looking ahead notices on summary statements and in signature lines of most NIH extramural staff
- Two major training sessions for applicant community – available live and via video
- Outreach materials and presentations made available for applicant use
- Video training library
- eSubmission website at http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/index.htm

R01 Communication Blitz

- Guide notice confirming R01 transition plan
- Press release
- Drop-in slides for all NIH presentations to applicants
- Nexus issue devoted to eSubmission
- E-mail blast to all recent applicants, both PIs and administrators
- Website banners and alerts
- Push for professional society distribution of message to constituents

How else does an applicant know?

- Every FOA includes explicit instructions
- The application guide states requirements and process
- Institute and OER websites reference eSubmission
  - Forms pages
  - Receipt date pages
  - Grants process pages
  - Specific grant program pages
- Reminder on summary statements received over last year
- NIH extramural staff use taglines with their signature blocks announcing transition

More Training Opportunities

- Upcoming Training Event
  - December 5, 2006 – in person and webcast training walking through process
  - December 4-6, 2006 - “hands-on” computer labs
  - NIH Regional Seminars in Utah in March and N. Carolina in April – labs and presentations
  - More labs to be offered in train-the-trainer approach
- Current training resources on website include:
  - Video library providing overview of application process and walk through of forms
  - Guides for self-paced hands-on training
  - Computer demos of registration process

It's Time. We Are Ready.

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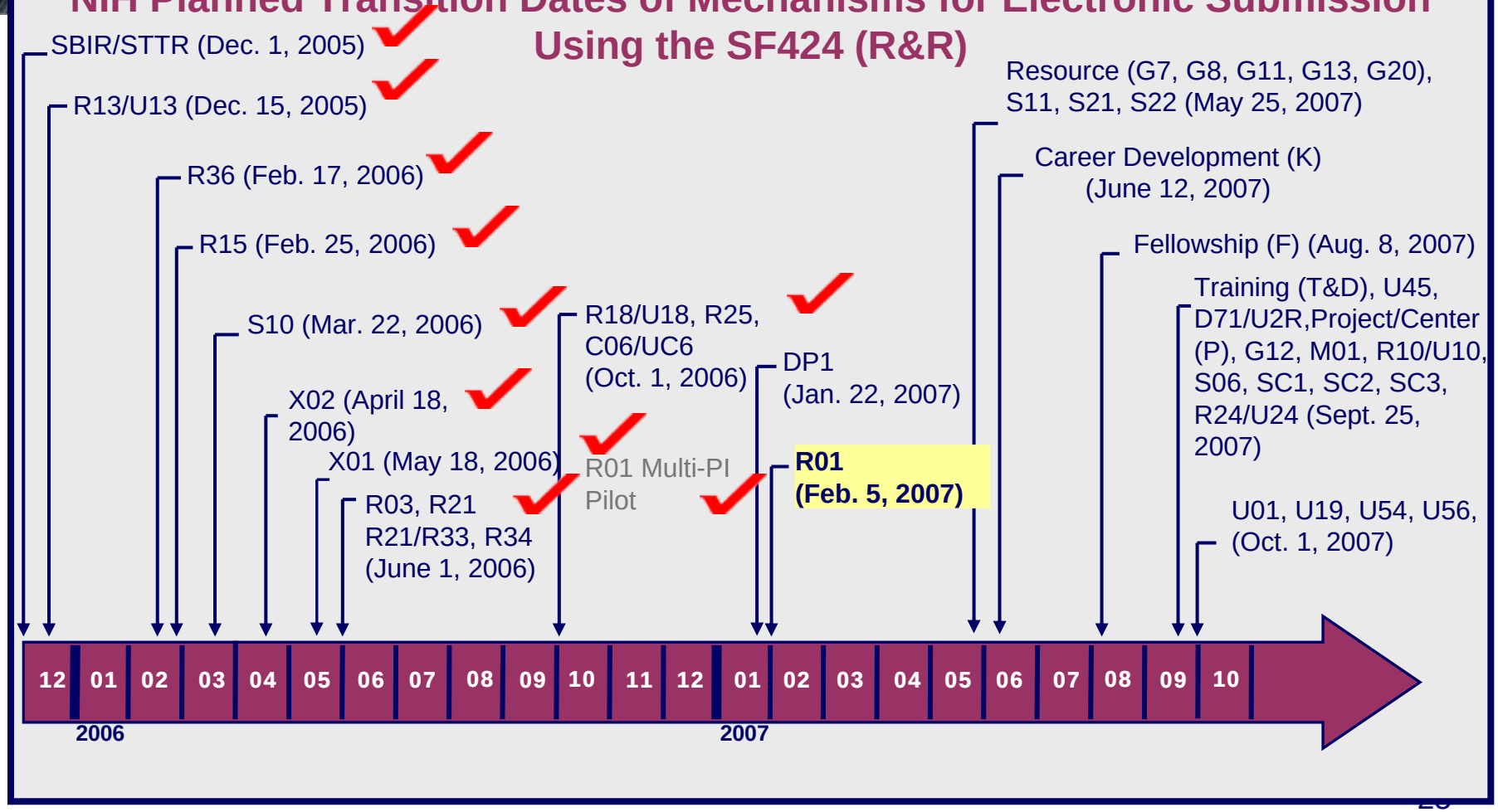

Thank You!